

'Two-bit designer' rides the Bicentennial waves

By Roger Boye

THE NATION'S Bicentennial quarter began circulating in Chicago last week, much to the delight of the man who designed the quarter's new reverse, Jack L. Ahr of Arlington Heights.

"I'm very happy to be called a 'two-bit designer,'" said Ahr, referring to the slang term for quarter, "two bits."

Ahr and several members of his family, including his wife, five children, and parents, were on hand last Monday for the Chicago ceremonies at which the Bicentennial quarter was released to the nation.

"I just wish he decided to have the name 'Ahr' put on the coin, rather than his initials," said his father, as he grinned and watched another photographer take pictures of his son, United States Mint Director Mary Brooks, and Robert P. Mayo, Chicago Federal Reserve Bank president. The designer's initials, J.L.A., appear on the coin above the letter "A" in "dollar."

Ahr's design was selected for the Bicentennial quarter from almost 1,000 entries received in a national competition last year. The designs of two other artists were selected for the reverse of the Bicentennial half-dollar and dollar coins. The half-dollar was put in circulation last month, and the dollar will be released in October.

The Bicentennial coins include three "firsts" in American coinage history, Mrs. Brooks said. These are:

- The first U.S. coins since the buffalo nickel [1913] to be designed by non-Mint designers;
- The first U.S. circulating coins ever issued to commemorate an anniversary of American

independence.

● The first U.S. circulating coins to be double-dated. The Bicentennial coins will carry the double date, 1776-1976, on the obverse or "heads" side.

The "heads" side of the three Bicentennial coins—Washington on the quarter, Kennedy on the half-dollar, and Eisenhower on the dollar—

will remain unchanged, except for the double date.

Ahr's quarter design will be the most widely circulating of the three Bicentennial coins. The Mint plans to produce at least 1.6 billion Bicentennial quarters before the end of 1976.

The Bicentennial reverse designs may continue after 1976, depending on the decision of the

secretary of the treasury.

Ahr operates his own company, Jack Ahr Design and Sales, in Arlington Heights. It specializes in the design of custom products, such as sales and employee incentive awards. This summer he also established the Peoples Mint, Inc., a company which will issue medals periodically.